1: Hart & Pilling E-5 (1928-1954) 1960
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nothing is so startling as to be told that the Tiwi almost completely lacked what we must call "positive" magic. Such familiar mainland practices as bone pointing or "singing" a man to injury or death were completely unknown on the islands, and though references to people dying through supernatural agency were often made, it was very hard to find any positive techniques or known practitioners of such techniques. Briefly the Tiwi may be said to have believed that magical acts were possible but to have lacked any knowledge of how to perform them. If, as anthropology is wont to teach, magic is used in the simpler societies to handle and control the unpredictable or mysterious areas of life, then this absence of magic among the Tiwi needs an explanation. Our hypothesis is that the Tiwi did not use magic in human relations because they had never invented magic for use in other unpredictable areas of life—for example, to control the natural world. And they had never invented magic to control their natural world because their physical environment was on the whole a satisfactory and not a hostile universe.

If we run through the areas of life that many of the simpler peoples use magical means to control, we find that many of them were not problems for the Tiwi. The rainfall and water supply were more than adequate; the food supply was good, needing only people to come and gather it; wild animals (except snakes and crocodiles) were unknown; tropical diseases (except yaws) scarcely existed; cyclones, tornados, and earthquakes were very rare, and thunder and lightning were no more frightening there than in, say, Chicago. Death, of course, is mysterious and unpredictable everywhere, but to handle that they had most elaborate burial and mourning customs that were not magical but collective rituals. Perhaps the most favorable feature in the whole friendly Tiwi universe was the absence of any neighboring tribe. Their cultural isolation removed all fear or suspicion of what the foreigners next door might be up to, and one gets the impression from the literature, though it has not been systematically explored, that the hotbeds of magic making and sorcery were areas of the primitive world, like Melanesia or Central Australia, where people were acutely conscious of their neighbors and always expecting magic and sorcery to be directed by them across the village or tribal boundaries. The Tiwi, having no neighbors, had nobody to be suspicious of except each other, and their suspicions of each other were mostly rational suspicions, of men motivated like themselves and using the same political tricks against each other.

The strongest support for the hypothesis that the Tiwi found their environment a friendly and reassuring universe to live in comes from their wide elaboration and reliance upon the negative form of magic called taboo. As a tribe they were magic free but taboo ridden. Their generic word for anything sacred or forbidden or untouchable was *pukimani*, a word which in its most common form referred to a state of special being in which a person or thing temporarily was. Thus mourners were *pukimani* for the period of their mourning, youths undergoing initiation were *pukimani* during the ceremonies, a woman who had just given birth was *pukimani* for a week or two afterwards. Dead bodies were *pukimani* until buried; graveposts were *pukimani*

1: Hart & Pilling E-5 (1928-1954) 1960
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once erected on the grave; the names of dead people immediately became *pukimani* on their deaths and could not be used, and the same was true of all the names bestowed by a dead man on the children of his household and all the other words in the language that sounded similar to the name of the dead man.[4] All ceremonials and rituals were *pukimani* as were the main performers and the armlets, neck ornaments, and other ceremonial objects. People in a *pukimani* state had to observe all sorts of avoidances of and abstentions from everyday actions, particularly with regard to food and sex. Close relatives of dead people could not touch food but had to be fed by nonmourners. That pillar of rigid orthodoxy, Tu'untalumi, was virtually never able to feed himself but was in a *pukimani* state almost the whole year round and needed one of his wives to feed him. (Another advantage of a large household.) Certain spots in the bush or on the banks of streams were *pukimani* places; the dimly seen outline of the Australian coast was *pukimani* as was the ocean near Cape Keith where the Tiwi ancestors had first created the Tiwi world; and finally, the violation of a *pukimani* restriction rendered the violator *pukimani*.

Pukimani as thus applied to people, places, things, names, words, restrictions, and avoidances, meant both sacred and taboo, and was clearly one of that widespread class of words and concepts that is almost standard among the simpler societies. The only noteworthy thing about its Tiwi form is that *pukimani* was a state which people did not actively seek to enter but which happened to people regardless of their wishes. Furthermore, when a man found himself in a state of *pukimani*, his behavior was automatically prescribed for him and for the duration of his *pukimani* condition he observed his avoidances and his abstentions just as automatically as he dropped them when his *pukimani* period expired. When he became *pukimani*, he punctiliously fulfilled the requirements because if he did not, he was likely to be unsuccessful in his enterprises. Big men simply did not dare to be casual about the requirements lest their reputations suffer and they lose face and influence. Less successful men were occasionally explained as probably being secret violators. "His wives and daughters all seem to die young; he must have broken some *pukimani* restrictions sometime" was a reason often given for somebody's failure to be as successful as he might have been. It was noticeable in such explanations of nonsuccess that the failure, or in our terms the bad luck, was attributed to the violation of the taboos, never to the active displeasure of the spirits. The spirits simply did not figure in the picture.

Apart from the big ceremonial occasions, a Tiwi did not have much concern with religion in his everyday life except through some aspect of the *pukimani* system. It was only through *pukimani* that the sacred world impinged upon him at all for most of the year. Since *pukimani* was a condition that could not be actively sought but "just happened" to a person every so often by such common events as the death of a relative, his wife giving birth, or his

[4] When a man named Tibuki died in 1928, a crisis occurred at the Mission where the natives were supposed to make their requests in pidgin English. How could they now ask for tobacco, since that word was now *pukimani*?

1: Hart & Pilling E-5 (1928-1954) 1960
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sister's son being initiated, the attitude of a Tiwi toward the whole *pukimani* state was essentially a passive attitude. *Pukimani* behavior was something one accepted and conformed to when required; it was in no way an active attempt to change nature, people, food, gods, spirits, or anything else in the universe. It is therefore not unreasonable to conclude that since their *pukimani* system offered them no handle by which to seek actively to alter the universe in which they lived, the Tiwi found that universe to their liking as it was. Unlike the tribes of central Australia who lavished a lot of thought upon magical methods of improving the food supply or the rainfall, the Tiwi believed and acted on the belief that as long as they observed their *pukimani* taboos, the food would continue to be as abundant and the rains as regular as they had always been. The central Australians, by seeking to coerce nature through magic, suggest that they found nature unsatisfactory; the Tiwi, by relying upon passive taboo-observance alone, suggest rather that their relationship to nature was an acceptable equilibrium that they wanted to preserve, not change. And if everybody observed his *pukimani* taboos when required, that equilibrium would remain undisturbed. Hence the antisocial man in Tiwi was not the maker of individual magic (he was unknown, anyway) but the nonobserver of taboo. By his nonobservance he threatened to upset the normally satisfactory equilibrium between man and nature. For a senior Tiwi male to be charged publicly with breaking *pukimani* rules was a disgrace and a blow to his prestige and his position in public opinion. His behavior was possibly a sin against the spirits but it was certainly a shame in the eyes of his fellows. *Pukimani* observance was thus a matter of respectability to a much greater degree than it was a matter of pleasing the spirits.

DEATH As was mentioned above, death is the natural phenomenon around which the Tiwi had woven their most elaborate web of ritual. The most frequent and most important Tiwi ceremonies were the mourning ceremonies, and they came in three sizes—small, medium, and large—depending on the age, sex, and importance of the dead person. The mourning ceremonies which drew the crowds were not held until some time after the death and burial. All bodies of dead persons were buried within twenty-four hours of their death by digging a hole near the camp where the death had occurred and placing the body, wrapped in bark, in it. Near most well-used camping spots there was already a graveyard marked by old graveposts, and the latest corpse was buried there or near there. Seldom was the body carried any distance for burial. If a person died even less than a mile from an old burial ground, there was little inclination to carry the body that far. He would be buried, instead, within perhaps a hundred yards of where he died. This had certain awkward repercussions for social organization, since occasionally a person died while away from his home district and, being buried where he died, his ceremonies were held and his posts erected in a district in which his immediate family did not live. Young men often used this to validate a change of residence, giving as their reason for living in a band territory in which they had not grown up, the location there of their father's graveposts.

2: Mountford E-5 (1954) 1958
QI20 Tiwi QI20

761 [825] [761] wallaby, so that he could see the grave of his victim without being recognised.

On one occasion, when I was travelling with *Pulanimbuwi*, just after the death of his wife, he went to her grave, carefully searched the ground for tracks, then lifting up the sheets of paper-bark, examined the mound. Later, *Pulanimbuwi* announced that a *Maratji* (p. 154) had killed his wife, *Nulatini*, by getting inside of her body. But, although still there when she was buried, the *Maratji* had escaped through the hole *Pulanimbuwi* had seen in the mound.[87]

(2) *The Seclusion of the Grave*

769 The grave of *Waniamperi* was about a hundred yards from the road between our camp and the Snake Bay aboriginal settlement. Although aborigines, who were only distantly related to the dead man, walked backward and forward along this road, all the *pukamuni* people had to take a roundabout path from which it was not possible to see the grave site.

One night, *Marawani*, one of the chief mourners, had to pass along the road to our camp. When he was approaching the position from which the grave site could be seen in the day-time, his wife, wrapping his head in a blanket, led him past the spot. This practice was only allowed at night; it was prohibited during the day.[88]

[775] [784] No aboriginal man hunted the creatures, or woman gathered the plant foods adjacent to the grave, so that, should the *mopaditi* of *Waniamperi* return to his burial place for a while he would find ample food.

4. THE PRELIMINARY CEREMONIES, THE ILANIAS

(1) *The Ilanias of Waniamperi*

765 About two months after the burial of *Waniamperi*, *Wurarbuti*, the ceremonial leader of the Melville Island people, sent message sticks to Bathurst Island aborigines telling them that the *ilanias* (preliminary rituals) of *Waniamperi* were about to start.

[123] We saw eleven of *Waniamperi's ilanias*. But, as they were more or less the same, I will describe only three.

[765] [87] *Pulanimbuwi's* action was viewed with considerable disfavour. He, as a near relative, should not have gone near the grave until the final rituals. Only the *wanaras* (workers) who cut the poles are allowed to do that.

[183] [88] Under the normal tribal conditions, these precautions would have been unnecessary, because the place of burial would then have been in some distant, unfrequented locality.

2: Mountford E-5 (1954) 1958
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533 (*b*) "The spirits of my children are dancing on a sand-bank beside the sea."
539 (*c*) "My children's spirits are paddling about in a canoe, looking for fish
881 and turtle eggs."

Another man first chanted a secular song, which he had tried to do earlier, but had forgotten the tune.

[177] (*d*) "I saw a tractor pulling big trees out of the ground to make the new aerodrome."

Then he continued with his *Kararitjui* song.

(*e*) "My little children have gone to the island, but they must come back because they are short of tobacco." After a pause he continued, "They're back because someone has just taken the tobacco out of my hand."

(12) *The Ceremonial Eating of the Kulama Yam*

881 On the third day, at early dawn, everybody went to the swamp to eat some of the prepared yams. The leader quietly plucked a bunch of grass from the edge of the water "to waken the *kulama* yam", for should it get a fright the yam would cause much sickness in the camp.

The fully initiated men, the *Mikingulas*, ate the first few pieces "to tame the yam", after which everyone took some to eat. This ritual ensures for all the participants, good health until the next *kulama*. Some of the prepared yam is left in the water for others to eat should they desire it.

This ritual completed the *kulama* ceremony. Everyone returned to his camp, and, except for the initiates of the lower grades, pursued a normal life. The grass ring and the pieces of antbed were left in place but the *kulama* ground and the *milimika* were deserted (Pl. 45D).

● 784 There are, however, a number of taboos and restrictions associated with
881 the deserted *kulama* ground and oven. For instance, should anyone make
[778] his camp or light a fire in the deserted *milimika*, the spirit of the *kulama* yam would be offended and blind the culprit.

If anyone were so foolish as to toss a piece of the antbed, from the oven, sand from the *milimika* or a fragment of cooked *kulama* yam into the sea, *Marayji*, the rainbow, would be angry and create heavy seas and storms.
[821] The aborigines of the Cape Fourcroy area were convinced that a recent hurricane, which devastated the whole area, was caused by some foolish person throwing a piece of *kulama* into the sea.

On the other hand, if a *kulama* man takes a piece of antbed from the oven,
[224] and throwing it at a tree, hits the mark, his hunting will be successful, until the next *kulama* ceremony. But, if he misses his mark, his hunting will be poor.

2: Mountford E-5 (1954) 1958
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the dead, they should never be taken from him. *Maratji* was so angry over this white man's act of sacrilege that he created a heavy storm to sink the boat and so prevent the theft.

The Maratjis at Maundu

Maundu, a freshwater lagoon on the south-western shores of Bathurst Island is the home of many *Maratjis*, males, females and children, under a leader called *Orini*. The water which flows from the lagoon, across the beach into the sea, is reddish in colour. This, according to the aborigines, is stained by the faeces of the *Maratjis*.

The aborigines of the adjoining *Mandubuka* totem are the only people safe from the attacks of the *Maratjis* of Maundu. To protect a stranger who has to go near Maundu, one of the local men, wiping the perspiration from his own armpits, rubs it over his companion.

The familiar body odour misleads the *Maratjis*, who do not attack the newcomer. Should this strange aboriginal have to cross the stream that flows from Maundu to the sea, a local man first makes the water muddy, then, walking through it instructs the stranger to step in his tracks. The stranger must recompense his guide for this protection. Should the stranger become thirsty and none of the local men are with him, he can safely drink at Maundu if he first makes the water muddy. At the *pukamuni* ceremony of *Waniamperi* which we witnessed at Melville Island, an elderly aboriginal, *Jibunglialumi*, whose nose had been eaten away by yaws, attributed his deformity to the attack of a *Maratji* because he drank from the clear, not the muddy water, of Maundu.

Even when a group of local aborigines has to pass the Maundu lagoon, they travel in single file, the elder men first, the younger men next, then the women and children, each adult placing his feet exactly in the footmarks of the person in front. No woman, during the period of her menses, must go near Maundu. If she did, *Maratji* would kill her. There are good ochres of many colours at Maundu but no one will use them. Tradition tells of an aboriginal, called *Alumgun*, who lost his life because he disregarded this taboo.

One side of a female *pukamuni* basket, Pl. 48c (indicated by the central hole), deals with the myth of *Maratji* at Maundu.

The central hole in the basket is the freshwater lagoon, Maundu; the radiating lines, *a*, *a*, etc., are the *Maratjis* and those at *b*, *b*, etc., strips of white sand on the bottom of the lagoon. The darker circles indicate the red (stained) water which runs from the lagoon, across the beach, into the sea, and the

9:Harney & Elkin E-4, 5 (ca. 1940) 1943 OI20 Tiwi OI20

Sickness is cured by beating the ground around the victim to hunt the evil spirit away. Likewise, a song, Upripu, is sung by the wives of the sick man to make him better. The *Kurawa*, a pointed bone, or sometimes a tomahawk is used to stab a person's urine or an article his body has touched (e.g. a bark he has lain upon to sleep) and so cause him to die. Blood thrown into the sea will cause a violent wind and a big tide. The Kulama rite will bring about the same result. No instance has been found of magic being used to entice the spirit from a person's body, yet if a person failed to show sympathy for the dead, the dead person's " shade " would cause that person to die and then run away with his " shade." To mention the name of the newly dead is taboo. If a person accidentally does this he must immediately hit his mouth and spit to cleanse it of the evil.

Names. The names given to the women and men are of three types; the first is the actual name and is given to a person at the Kulama rite; this is an ordinary word such as " honey nest," etc., but it is always in a different language from the ordinary one which is used everyday. The child also receives the name of his father, father's brother or father's sister; this is a traditional name. Then, in the case of a male, come the terms denoting his initiation grade in the Kulama. First stage—*Murakmani*; second stage—*Wadjaneta*; third stage—*Migingartiya*=first song and *Midjintera*=second song; fourth stage—*Mekearterima*=third song; and finally, *Makagala*, which denotes that the man is qualified to conduct a Kulama. Likewise, both sexes have grade names denoting their status in the Pukamane death ritual. Male terms: first stage—*waniati*; second stage—*warunerera*; third stage—*wanercterima*; fourth stage—*wanderara*. With girls and women these names are the same except for the ending denoting the sex.

In the case of women there are terms denoting age or condition. *Kudjine*—child; *alinga*—girl; *miriyaleta*—puberty; *murogarbra*—breasts developed; *piramuruka*—first sign of pregnancy; *paprungata*—pregnant woman; *wanantaka*—woman who has a child dead, and *umparu*—widow. Other terms are *pilukwen*—widower; *mentuygini* and *padrubayga*—boy and girl respectively, whose mother is pregnant; *indjula*—a woman whose breasts have fallen; and as on the mainland, a mother is always called by the sex of the child she carries in her arms: *oriowri* if a boy, *kudjine* if a girl.

Language. The language is peculiar. In many instances, owing to the masculine and feminine endings of the words, the women seem to speak a different language to the men. In addition, another language, or set of words, which is very rarely spoken, seems to obtrude itself. Thus one article will have many names. This is brought about by the strong death-taboo on names; as soon as a native dies, his names and his son's names are taboo and others are substituted. In this way every year new words are coined. Only recently at a Kulama two new ones appeared as a consequence of this taboo. *Purinteriya*, new name for tree, and *alepwa*, new name for coconut. Or a Kulama name may be given as, say, *wilinkurawa*, the meaning of which will be given as honey nest; and yet numerous words for honey are nothing

884 194 the technique had to be made meaningful to the initiates, the lifesaving qualities of this famine food were explained as health-giving powers. A ceremony accompanied by song and dance was certainly a dramatic and effective means of impressing the initiates in preparation methods. The ritual served another purpose as well: because traveling is so [180] difficult during the rainy season, each household is isolated from the others. The *Kulama* ritual follows this period, and it is natural to expect a reunion to be an occasion to exchange news, settle differences, and tell stories or sing songs that keep traditions alive.

885 MUCH harder to account for is the Tiwi idea of adulthood. That every adult is solely responsible for his own health and wealth, and that success in life depends entirely on personal behavior and industry, are ideals [171] strangely similar to those that underlie the American way of life, despite the great gulf between the aboriginal culture and our own. But it is not at all surprising that the Tiwi 177 have a great sympathy for much of Western civilization. Many hold the same views as the *Kulama* singer quoted earlier in this article who saw his children wearing clothes [181] and shoes and going to school to learn to write, for this is the Tiwi's contemporaneous idea of success in a way of life introduced to them only a few short years ago.

Early in the summer of 1962 I revisited the Tiwi for [114] two weeks. Although I knew that the Tiwi desired schooling and training in European ways of life and would seize any such opportunity afforded them, I was hardly prepared for the tremendous changes that had taken place during the eight years that had elapsed since my first visit.

Three months after the *Kulama* ceremony of 1954, a [871] government school was opened. Now all the Tiwi children go to school, and some who have finished the six-year program in the government school have received subsequent training as teaching or nursing assistants. Some others have had "on-the-job" training in various activities connected with a large-scale forestry project that has been started on Melville Island. In fact, all the able-bodied Tiwi men and women are currently employed, and their tasks bear little or no relation to their old life in the bush.

It is perhaps significant—but to me not at all surprising—that I did not hear a single real complaint from the Tiwi regarding their new manner of living. They seem to like it and are anticipating bigger and better things (in the [224] Western sense) for their children. Hunting has become [868] a week-end diversion and the children receive little or no real instruction in that traditional skill.

178 SOME aspects of Tiwi life are slow to die, however. Most of the old taboos, the observance of which was con- 784 sidered necessary in the past in order to insure health and wealth, are still observed, although at least one teen-ager expressed doubt that the taboos had any actual effect on the outcome of one's life. Western medicine and public 177 health practices are fast replacing belief in the *Kulama*. 884 During the past eight years only three men have begun the six years of training for *Kulama* initiation, and some of the older men no longer participate in the ceremony. However, as long as even a small number of Tiwi believe in the *Kulama*, the ritual will survive, but I doubt that it will for long.

000 NEAR END of *Kulama* ceremony, performer, although hoarse and tired, must continue to sing until late in the night.

[P. 16, (B)]